

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

RECREATION ACTIVITIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Snowmobiling

Desired Experiences and Site Selection Considerations

Riding snowmobiles occurs on over 22,000 miles of interconnected groomed trails across the state. The trails are open to the public and located on both private and public property, with most trails maintained and groomed by volunteer members of over the 600 snowmobile clubs in the state. Participation is weather (snow) dependent and trails in the southern part of the state have recently been open relatively less than average.

Public properties with trails include county forests, national forests and various state properties. DNR properties often provide connections between trail networks on surrounding lands. Participants range from casual to highly dedicated with some participants riding short distances to a destination (e.g., a local supper club) while others prefer long-distance riding and often cover hundreds of miles in a day. Long-distance riders will both “base camp” (stay in one location and ride back to that location each night) and move from one place of lodging to the next for multiple nights.

Funding from machine registration, fuel tax and snowmobile trail passes is available for maintenance on state-designated trails. Construction and maintenance is often performed by local snowmobile clubs. Refer to the Department Design Standards Handbook (8605.1, Chapter 30 (Trails) and Chapter 90 (Parking)) and the Trails Handbook (2540.5) for further design guidelines.

Characteristics of snowmobile trails on department lands include the following:

- Trails need to be 12’ wide at a minimum with bridges engineered to support grooming equipment, which can weigh up to 25,000 pounds.
- Rolling terrain is acceptable but grades and slopes should not exceed 25%.
- Trails are generally not routed over bodies of water or in or near areas of anticipated conflict (e.g., wilderness areas, game preserves, residences and other sensitive areas).

Notable Differences in Participation or Opportunities Across the State

Participation is weather-dependent and as such participants often travel (trailer machines) to better snow conditions and more extensive trail systems. In particular, northern Wisconsin’s consistent snow cover and vast network of trails draws many snowmobilers from the southern part of the state and Illinois.

Notable Times of the Year of High or Low Participation

This activity is entirely dependent on weather and snowfall with participation taking place in winter months.



Participation

Participation Rate and Frequency

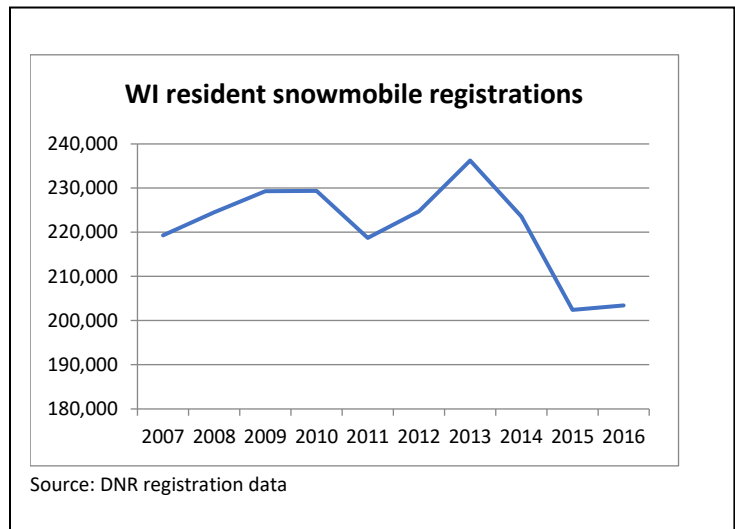
Based on a 2016 survey of Wisconsin residents conducted for the development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is estimated that 15% of adult Wisconsin residents participate in snowmobiling. This ranked #39 out of 64 activities evaluated.

Days/year	% of Snowmobilers
1 to 2	39
3 to 9	34
10 to 29	17
30 or more	11
Total	100%

In terms of frequency, participants that engaged in snowmobiling did so about in line with participants in other types of recreation (snowmobiling ranked #33 in frequency out of 64 activities evaluated). Given that the snowmobiling season is limited, this participation frequency may indicate that snowmobilers participate frequently when conditions are good.

Estimated Trends

From 1998 to 2016, average cumulative snowfall in Eau Claire, Wausau, Green Bay, and Madison was compared to resident snowmobile registrations. These data showed some correlation between snowfall and snowmobile registrations. For example, registrations dropped over 10,000 from the 2010-2011 to the 2011-2012 season when the snowfall dropped 47 inches and rose by nearly 6,000 in the 2012-2013 season when snowfall was up by 45 inches. This correlation suggests that snowfall has an impact on snowmobiling participation.



Nationally, snowmobiling is expected to see the largest decline in participation rate among all major recreation activities. By 2030, the rate is projected to drop by over 10%. If climate change is incorporated into these data, there is a projected average net decrease of near 40% due to lack of snow throughout the country (White et al. 2016).

Demographics

As can be seen from the SCORP survey results in the table below, participants in snowmobiling in Wisconsin tend to be younger, rural men. Because of the upfront costs as well as the expenses associated with use and maintenance, snowmobiling can require more of a financial investment than many other outdoor activities. This likely shifts some participation to older age groups that typically have more disposable income.

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	24	34
	30-39	18	22



Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
	40-49	19	19
	50-59	13	18
	60-69	7	6
	70 and older	3	2
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	12	41
	Male	18	59
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	20	64
	Urban	10	36
	Total	--	100

References

White, E.M., J.M. Bowker, A.E. Askew, L.L. Langner, J.R. Arnold, and D.B.K. English. 2016. *Federal Outdoor Recreation Trends: Effects on Economic Opportunities*. United States Department of Agriculture.

